

**BUDGET STATEMENT
FY2013**

**MONA NORIEGA
CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONER
CHICAGO COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS**

OCTOBER 12, 2012

Honorable Chairman Austin and Honorable Members of the City Council Committee on the Budget and Government Operations:

On behalf of the Board of Commissioners and staff, I hereby submit the following statement in support of the Mayor's 2013 Budget Recommendation for the Commission on Human Relations:

In keeping with the Mayor's directive to work more creatively and efficiently, the proposed budget does not include any new positions and it reduces the department's budget by \$165,462. This reduction represents a consolidation of office space from two floors to one floor and as a part of the Mayor's new Veteran's initiative to address Veteran needs of employment, the transfer of the Director/Community Liaison of the Veteran's Advisory Council position to the Department of Family and Support Services. For 2013, the Commission will occupy 12,571 less square feet and have 20 positions as opposed to 21 in 2012.

The Chicago Commission on Human Relations (CCHR)

The Chicago Commission on Human Relations addresses issues of discrimination by enforcing the Human Rights Ordinance and the Fair Housing Ordinance. We have the power to investigate complaints of discrimination, conduct administrative hearings and rule on claims, impose fines and civil remedies for violations, mediate conflicts, and advocate on behalf of victims of hate crimes. We work proactively to prevent discrimination through a variety of educational initiatives.

In 2012 we increased productivity and effectiveness. We worked to enhance the Commission's visibility to the public across Chicago's many diverse communities in order to provide an avenue for all people to seek remedies in the face of discrimination. We have worked to overcome language and cultural barriers, to reach out to communities under attack and those communities who suffer discrimination in silence because of fear or lack of knowledge about the law and its available remedies through the Commission on Human Relations. Our goals for 2013 are to continue to prioritize productivity and effectiveness. In addition, we will strategically target underserved populations that experience discrimination and have barriers to accessing legal protections.

Investigation and Adjudication of Discrimination Complaints

The Commission's Adjudication Division is responsible for the intake, investigation, and hearing processes for complaints filed under the Human Rights Ordinance and Fair Housing Ordinance. These ordinances define and prohibit discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, credit transactions, and bonding based on 15 protected classes; race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, parental status, marital status, military discharge status, source of income, and credit history (in employment only). Through the powers granted to us by

the Commission on Human Relations Enabling Ordinance, the Commission has the authority to issue subpoenas, award monetary damages and injunctive relief, and assess fines.

In 2012, we have taken the following steps to educate the public about the Commission's powers and potential remedies when faced with discrimination:

Increase Audiences Served

When people are harmed unjustly, many may not understand that they have been victims of unlawful discrimination. Others may know, but are not aware that the City of Chicago through the Commission on Human Relations is available to help them. It is disappointing that women who are pregnant are still being fired from jobs, families with Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers are still being turned away when attempting to rent apartments, and people in wheelchairs continue to be unable to join their families and friends at inaccessible restaurants. Through our outreach efforts, the Commission seeks to inform the public about their rights under the law and our services to stop discriminatory practices.

Some of the ways the Commission on Human Relations has worked to broaden outreach efforts in 2012 include increasing brochure distribution to communities in need and outreach to community organizations that serve as a referral mechanism to the Commission's services. As a result, in 2012, our staff has distributed more than 16,000 Commission brochures, in both English and Spanish, and has reached out to over 150 community organizations throughout the city. We have utilized the distribution infrastructure of the City of Chicago sister agencies that are evenly disbursed throughout the city and have used the libraries, city colleges and social service centers as locations to deliver an additional 15,000 brochures. Understanding that culture and language serve as barriers to accessing services the Commission has also sought to increase presentations and services delivered in Spanish and increase the number of languages our printed materials are available in—just this week the brochures were translated and printed in Polish and Chinese.

Proactive Measures to Prevent Discrimination

Our assumption is that if people know the law and that there are penalties for illegal discrimination; they will choose to obey the law. We work to prevent discrimination from occurring so no Chicagoan will have to suffer the emotional and other harmful effects of discrimination. We seek to be proactive by providing education to businesses, community and city departments, sister agencies, and the real estate industry to improve compliance with the law. For example, we have worked with other city departments such as Business Affairs and Consumer Protections, Housing and Economic Development, Civil Rights Unit of the Chicago Police Department, the Office of New Americans, and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD). In particular with the MOPD we are working in collaboration to revise the Chicago Human Rights Ordinance regulations with respect to public accommodations to make them more in line with the ADA regulations. Most small businesses have a better understanding of the ADA, thus these changes will help them better comply with the law and avoid potential discrimination complaints. We have also realized partnership opportunities at the federal level, working most recently with the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice regarding Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices.

Additional outreach efforts by which to prevent discrimination include:

- Outreach to businesses through chambers of commerce email newsletters and to delegate agencies through BACP
- Monthly inserts in BACP's email newsletter on relevant areas of the law
- Presentations and workshops with and to community organizations

- Targeted and expanded distribution of Commission materials
- Creation and distribution of issue specific one page handouts covering pertinent legal issues
- Expanded information available on the Commission's web page

Making Our Process Easier and More Accessible to the Public

To meet the challenge of making the City of Chicago more efficient and accessible to all residents requires that people understand what their rights are under the law and what potential remedies are available when faced with discrimination or are a victim of a hate crime. The Commission has taken several steps to help the public better understand our complaint filing and adjudication process and made it easier to obtain information about the department.

Some of these changes have included:

- Updating the Subject Matter Index of the Commission's precedential legal decisions, for the first time in 6 years, and making it available to attorneys and the general public on our web page
- Adding resources on our web page
- Enlarging the points of access to the Commission through the development of 311 codes so the public can access our services by calling 311

Measurable Objectives

Justice delayed is justice denied. While the administrative complaint process by definition offers each party ample time to submit and reply to complaints, the Commission strives to complete all of our investigations and legal determinations in a timely manner. Each week we receive complaints from the public. By the end of the year in 2011 we received a total of 267 complaints of discrimination. As of October 5, 2012, we have received a total of 187 complaints of discrimination; 67 complaints in regards to housing, 66 complaints in regards to employment and 54 in regards to public accommodations.

The investigation stage can range from a few weeks to a couple of years. The time needed to complete an investigation depends on factors such as the number and complexity of claims in the complaint, the amount of evidence, and the cooperativeness of parties and witnesses. Our goal is keep pace with new filings and to complete 90% of investigations within one year of complaint filing and 50% within six months.

Also, through October 2012 the Board of Commissioners has issued 10 final rulings after administrative hearings, six in favor of complainants and four in favor of respondents, and staff have issued nine additional precedential opinions deciding important legal issues arising in our cases. In addition to numerical measures regarding the number of complaints received and decisions made, quality of decision-making can be measured in terms of how Commission decisions fare when losing parties seek review in state court. To date in 2012 we have received three state court decisions fully affirming our final rulings. No final decision has been reversed or modified by the state courts since 2008.

Finally, we will continue to expand the content and enhance the user-friendliness of our web page as a resource and an educational tool. We will also increase our efforts to make the Commission's staff more visible in educating communities about various areas of discrimination.

Inter-Group Relations (IGR)

The IGR Unit of the Commission on Human Relations responds to incidents of intergroup violence and conflict within communities. Intervention tools include mediation, education and community engagement. Under the City of Chicago's hate crimes law, the agency advocates for and offers assistance to hate crime victims. IGR also works proactively by providing educational workshops to reduce discrimination and hate while promoting intergroup understanding. Many of the conflicts that IGR is called upon to address are often fueled by misunderstanding and fear based on racial, economic, or cultural differences. This can be anything from newly relocated CHA residents being targeted for hate crimes in their new neighborhood, to a conflict between angry community residents and neighborhood merchants, to bullying in the schools. If community tensions are not quickly addressed they can escalate into violent confrontations or hate crimes. Following the Commission's standard operating procedures IGR staff work to identify key stakeholders and leaders in these communities to discuss concerns and develop community based solutions.

The Inter-Group Relations strategies as outlined below increase awareness of civil rights protections prevent violence based on protected classes, and advocate for hate crime victims:

- Reach beyond cultural and language barriers and fully engage the volunteer Board of Commissioners and Advisory Council members who represent the protected classes to outreach to their respective communities with the goal of changing behavior.
- Build on internal language capacity of staff and increase delivered services and outreach in Spanish. Build on language capacity of volunteer Board of Commissioners and Advisory Council members for outreach and translation services.
- Increase channels of communication beyond in-person presentations and print to include radio and social media.
- Prioritize education and curriculum development as a means of preventing violence against members of the protected classes and deliver workshops on hate crimes, diversity training, bullying, and conflict management.
- Target hate crime outreach to religious communities, communities of color, and the LGBT communities. Additionally, convene stakeholders who work on issues of hate crimes to develop common objectives in addressing hate crimes and further develop the infrastructure upon which hate crime policy recommendations can be made.

Education and Outreach

Understanding that violence and hate crimes are most often based on race, religion, and other differences, increased outreach to schools and communities most often victimized by violence, in English and Spanish, is a priority. To help address this issue, IGR has expanded its human relations curriculum to include workshops on diversity, bullying, and conflict management, in addition to its existing module on hate crimes. In 2012 our disability awareness outreach targeted business owners and operators to explain their legal obligations under the Chicago Human Rights Ordinance to encourage more businesses to become fully accessible. In 2013 we will expand our outreach and target members of the disability community regarding their rights and potential remedies when faced with discriminatory action.

We continue to work with Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) to reach out to business owners and operators about their legal obligations through BACP's email blasts and educational forums to Delegate Agencies. Similarly, we are continuing to work with chambers of commerce to reach their members by contributing important legal information to their email newsletters.

Measureable Objectives

Quantifying the absence of violence through the work of IGR is difficult, but through their mediating and intervention efforts we project that many acts of violence against persons and property, as well as hate crimes, have been prevented. Examples of reactive and proactive strategies IGR has completed as of September 30, 2012:

- Community tensions are conflicts often fueled by misunderstanding and fear based on racial, economic, or cultural differences. To date IGR has responded to 40 community tensions.
- Hate crimes are acts of bigotry, and are committed because of the intended victim's actual or perceived ancestry, color, creed, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability (including HIV status), or national origin. To date IGR has assisted victims of 50 reported hate incidents.
- Presentations are specific to the ordinances that CCHR enforces, and the adjudication, mediation and victim hate crime support services offered. The audiences are decision makers who will either take action on their own behalf or refer victims of discrimination or hate incidents to the CCHR. To date IGR has made 91 presentations to 1,197 people.
- Work Shops are trainings on hate crimes, diversity, bullying, or conflict management with specific learning outcomes, most often delivered in response to a violent act in a school or hate incident in a community or as part of schools, youth or neighborhood organizations leadership development programs. To date IGR has conducted 31 workshops for 833 participants

Serving Constituent Communities

For the 2012 budget, the Commission's previous volunteer groups of advisory councils were restructured. There are currently three budgeted councils at the Commission; Equity, Women and LGBT, and Veterans. As of next year, the Veterans Council will be transferred to the Department of Family and Support Services where it will be instrumental in helping to carry out the Mayor's initiative to help more returning veterans find jobs.

We hope that this information is of assistance to you as you consider the Mayor's budget recommendation for our department. Thank you in advance for your most thoughtful consideration and continued support.

Respectfully,



Mona Noriega
Chairman and Commissioner

Enclosures

2013 Budget Hearing

Total Purchases: \$3,579.31

Staffing Data

New Hires Ethnicity and Gender				
	Male	Female	Total	%
Asian	0	0	0	0%
Black	0	0	0	0%
Hispanic	0	1	1	100%
White	0	0	0	0%
Total	0	1	0	100%
	0%	100%		

Interns

[illegible]

Chicago Commission on Human Relations

2013 Organizational Chart

